

finitely wider and grander. There will not be fewer opportunities for the exercise of thought; imagination, affection, energy, but vastly more. Effort there, however, will be free from the weariness and fatigue which sap the strength of mind and body now. The sting of sin will be gone, and all the restraints that come from the crippling effects of weakness, infirmity and sickness will have vanished forever. The life of communion with God thru the Lord will be infinitely more blessed, and that spiritual life will so permeate thought and action that the distinctions which we here draw between the sacred and the secular will cease to exist. Joy will pervade heaven thru-out, and holiness and love manifest themselves everywhere and thru all things.—*Reformed Church Messenger.*

#### THE CHARACTER REFLECTED IN THE THOUGHT

Our thoughts are the measure of our character, because all the elements of our being find expression in our thoughts. The intellect, the affections, the motives, and the attainments, all have their part in shaping our thoughts. Our opinions and judgements are miniature of ourselves. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." The character which is narrow and mean will give rise to thoughts which are small and prejudiced while the generous heart and the noble mind will express themselves in thoughts which are elevated and comprehensive. Men come nearer to one another when they come into contact with each other's thoughts. When we look only on the outer lives of men, and judge them by our sight and hearing, there is danger that we are simply reading our own thoughts into their actions. When we come close enough to our fellows to find out what their real thought is, and what the genesis and spirit of that thought are, we may find that in our more superficial observation we have wholly misconstrued their action. There is no more common and no more vicious habit than that of projecting our own thoughts and inferences into other people's action. The man who always finds some unworthy motive in his neighbor's life is probably a person who lives and acts from very narrow and belittling motives himself as a social censor causes judgment to be passed upon nobody so conclusively as upon himself. All experience proves that in this sense also the law holds good, he who judges is judged.

A man's thoughts are the immediate product of his inner life. His actions are also an expression and interpretation of his character, but in the sphere of another's action we never can so surely estimate the quality of his life, as in the sphere of his thoughts for in judging actions we are measuring him by external texts which may not be the true criteria of his character.

Because the thoughts are the truest expression which a man gives to himself, what more convincing proof could we have of a man's moral infirmity than is found in the

errors and wandering of his thoughts, and in his difficulty of sustaining them by high motives. It is a humiliating but unquestionable fact that if we would hold our thoughts to high principles and inspire them with worthy motives, we must do so at the cost of constant watchfulness and exertion. We must have that spirit which the Psalmist expresses in his prayer: "Try me, O God, and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me." If we could keep sin out of our thoughts, we could keep it out of our lives. It is the temptation which a man keeps thinking about which at length overpowers him. If he has the strength of will to say, "Begone from my thoughts; this enticement shall have no consideration whatever," he will then have a sure and easy victory over the temptation.

It is often a question of importance whether we shall repulse temptation when it makes its first assault upon us, since that attack always consists in the effort to gain a favorable consideration from us, to induce us to dwell upon it in thought, to give to the evil course of action suggested a willing hearing. It is just at this point that the decision conflict is likely to occur. If the tempter conquers here, he marches to an easy and complete victory. When a man keeps thinking about the proposal to drive a dishonest bargain for money, he is then trembling in the balance, and all experience proves that he is more likely than not to yield. He is like one who has not indeed gone over the cataract, but is approaching its very edge, drawn powerfully forward by the strong currents which sweep thither. These currents are his own thoughts, which are now tending to carry him over.

The great secret of success in meeting the assaults of evil lies in the power to repulse the evil at its very first approach by denying it entertainment in our thoughts. It is not safe to permit the temptation to entrench itself in the imagination, and to kindle the desire from some enjoyment which it may promise. The most decisive struggle is often over the very first question that arises; namely, whether this sin shall have any favorable consideration whatever, and the surest victory is won in the firm decision that it shall not. If the thoughts are saved from evil, the hands will be secured from its commission and the character from its taint.

But in another respect the thoughts are the reflection and measure of the character. They often reveal, in spite of their weakness and sinfulness, a nobler aspiration and deeper desire for goodness, which underlies that character which men see and judge. Even men whose thoughts are frequently led captive by sin, sometimes break away in fitful freedom; and even tho, like slaves, they may soon be hunted down and caught again, they do yet prove by their outbreak that the soul has in it still some struggling remnant of freedom; and, tho it cannot escape its thralldom completely, it does sometimes shake and clank its chains, and proclaim

that it is still a soul capable of rising into a free and noble life, if only some Divine hand could break the power of reigning sin.

Men are often better in their thoughts—at least, in the thoughts which they sometimes cherish—than they are in ordinary deeds and prevailing character. Thru the dull windows of the dark prison which they have built for their souls they do sometimes look out and see the sunshine, and feel that the world is still beautiful, and that it might have been beautiful for them. Under the dust and ashes of many a miserable life there still gleams out, now and then, a faint flash of some spark of better feeling or desire,—a feeble kindling of thought which proves that there is something divine and precious even in the wreck of a ruined life. The way in which good thoughts may be quenched to a dying ember is at once proof of human depravity and of human dignity; for if men's possibilities of loss are so great, what must be the contrary possibilities of gain and elevation! If thought can sink so low, it can rise correspondingly high. That which in some life is a dull, dying spark, might have been a mind reflecting in all its faculties and feelings the very glory of God.

The unbounded possibilities, the elevation and goodness, to which thought may rise, seem more striking and wonderful the more we contemplate them. The responsibility for the use of the power of thought is a great and solemn one. When one reflects upon the vast range of objects with which the thoughts may occupy themselves; upon the high principles and truths to which they may mount up; upon the swiftness with which they may fly beyond and above time and the world, bringing back to the mind, from all these excursions, reflections and impressions which pre eminently affect the imagination, give tone to the feelings, and influence and shape the whole character,—the heart may well be moved to utter the prayer of David, that God would search, cleanse, and elevate the thoughts which are constantly carrying into the life, on their swift wings, influences from every realm of being. When we think of the perils to which thought is exposed as it flies thru all the scenes which memory conjures up to view, and consider the worlds which imagination builds for thought to revel in, the material which knowledge supplies for them to work upon, and the multitude of interests which press for a place in our thoughts, we may well be impressed with the truth that every man has within himself a kingdom to rule which requires at once all the strength of his best purposes and the continued guidance and grace of God.

Four things a man must learn to do  
If he would make his record true:  
To think without confusion clearly;  
To love his fellow men sincerely;  
To act from honest motives purely;  
To trust in God and heaven securely.

—Henry Van Dyke.